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## HAS CHRISTIANITY THE MORAL RIGHT TO SUPPLANT THE ETHNIC FAITHS?

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REV. HENRY C. MABIE, D.D., SECRETARY OF THE AMERICAN BAPTIST MISSIONARY UNION; PAUL CARUS, PH.D., CHICAGO, ILL.; PROFESSOR FRANCIS A. CHRISTIE, A.B., MEADVILLE THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL

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### THE DIVINE RIGHT OF CHRISTIAN MISSIONS

I have been asked in this paper to answer the question: "Has Christianity the moral right to attempt to supplant the ethnic faiths?"

The influences which have given rise to this query are mainly two; the conception of missions represented by questionable forms of missionary zealotry, and prevalent thought-tendencies in the realm of comparative religion. Of all religions Christianity is recognized as the most missionary. Its aggressiveness proves disturbing to the less missionary ethnic faiths. The right of Christianity thus to disturb other systems is doubted. Ere men are aware, sympathy is engendered for one type of these faiths as against another when the two are viewed as contestants. A spirit of championship then springs up, and a zeal for partisan victory obscures the importance of the truth at stake. If the question were, "Has any form of religion a moral right to *play at religion as a game*," as the situation is sometimes conceived, we should answer: "No!" The real issue involved is vastly deeper and more serious. There is something more than a tournament on.

The fact that the question of the legitimacy of missions prevails in many minds is sufficient reason why it should be squarely faced and met. The answer to it profoundly affects, not only Christian missions, but moral effort of every kind.

It is important at the outset to establish an understanding of terms. To attempt to answer the question propounded in its present form would be to increase a confusion already existing. In the query put to me there are implied at least three grave assumptions. They are these:

1. That the ethnic faiths as they now exist, equally with the Christian, *are of divine origin*.
2. That Christian missionary effort is intrinsically the *assertion of a right*—a right asserted as against other natural rights.
3. That such missionary effort, by first intention at least, seeks to *supplant what is really defensible*.

When we shall have disposed of these erroneous presuppositions and restated the case as its nature requires, we shall have gone far toward answering the question before us.

As to the first element of misconception, although not stated in the question propounded, it is implied that the ethnic faiths have an equal standing with Christianity in the court of comparative religion; and, if so, that they have such standing because of their inherent meritorious qualities—such qualities as meet the real needs of the people now holding them. But this inference is due to a priori considerations and begs the question involved. Such an inference concretely expressed means to say, for example, that Christianity and Hinduism equally arose out of purely natural antecedent causes; that, in the nature of the case, Hinduism is as perfectly adapted to meet the needs of Hindus as Christianity is to meet the needs of Anglo-Saxons; that God is as really the author of one set of adaptations as of the other; that there is nothing more supernatural in Christianity than in Hinduism; and that therefore the attempt of occidentals to enter Asia and to readjust Hindu conditions to Christian ideals is an impertinence and an intrusion. Any such plea entered for the non-Christian religions grows out of hidden premises—premises that are assumed, but are really the very things that need to be proved. Such plea, so common in our day,

is a deduction of the so-called "historical method," just now so much in vogue. It is a corollary of the doctrine of evolution extremely viewed. But a just view of the evolutionary principle warrants no such corollary, and the deduction is an abuse of the historical method, however legitimate that method is within certain limits.

In the view of its champions, the "historical method" is thought to be the one great and decisive medium of knowledge; whereas there are other methods of vastly more worth. One has said of this method:

It assumes to determine what is by what has been; it elucidates the law of man's moral nature by the principles which are supposed to have governed the anthropoid ape; the authority of the Bible by going back to the ghost-and spirit-worship which are supposed to be its real genesis. The nature and value of each present fact is determined by its supposed historic origin and development. But we may reverse the process; interpret the monkey by the man; get light on the value of the Hebrew revelation by its solution of our present problems; . . . look for the Maker's mark not only in the fire-mist, but in the structure of the moral organism. . . . It is often a matter of great advantage not to have to wait for the "historic method" to be perfected and corrected; for example, when a man has an attack of appendicitis, the knowledge of the vermiform appendix as it now is, yields a far more valuable contribution to the solution of his case than the entire history of that organ.<sup>1</sup>

And especially, we would add, when the history in question is most hypothetical.

Now, respecting the origin of the ethnic religions, it must at the least be said that they cannot be accounted for by a simple, uniform, upward evolution; their genesis is composite. Even though some or all of them started with elements of truth, they now represent dreadful deteriorations and corruptions of an earlier purity. Doubtless underlying all these religions there are some elements of natural, and hence of true, religion: certain intuitions, suggestions of conscience, and hints of nature conveying much needful knowledge of God. "These not having the law (revelation) are a law (revelation) unto themselves." This form of light is the common property of all men with or without a book revelation; and it emanates from Christ, the eternal Logos. Moreover, this form of light affords even an elementary gospel, as Paul in Rom. 2:4-10 clearly inti-

<sup>1</sup> John Henry Denison, in an article in the *Atlantic Monthly* for June, 1906, entitled, "The White Death of the Soul."

mates, however poorly apprehended or appropriated that gospel is. If men had given credence to such early gospel hints as were afforded by Abel's altar or by their own deeper intuitions; if they had so believed as to act on their best belief—for such and such only is faith—they would have been saved in some infantine degree. Among antediluvians, for example, Noah had, as Dr. William Ashmore has said, “no monopoly of gopher wood.” There was a monopoly in unbelief, except as Noah and his family were the shining exceptions to it.

But no truly historic account of the ethnic religions can be just that does not take note of the persistent tendencies of sin to pervert man's original stock of truth. Sin has distorted the elements of primitive religion with which the ethnic faiths started; it has falsified normal conceptions of both God and man. Sin is God-accusing as well as self-justifying; it projects its own perverseness upon God. “I knew thee that thou art an hard man,” said the man in the parable. He really knew nothing of the kind. He himself was the “hard man,” who should have discerned a truer aspect of the divine character. The God of this man's evil imagination was a fiction. Sin has thus been a fruitful means of introducing into all the ethnic religions fearful perversions of an earlier good.

Then official and ecclesiastical traditionalism and self-interest have left their marks upon the ethnic religions. This has been true in Judaism and even in Christianity. Because of the mischievous effects of priestcraft and clericalism, Israel lost her nationality and Christianity early fell from her apostolic estate, and has but slowly recovered. Surely the ethnic faiths have not been exempt from similar deterioration.

If the principle of evolution as a factor has played a part in the development of religious systems and activities, retrogression and degeneracy have played their mischievous part also. “Broken lights” of the true “Sun of Righteousness” which once existed have been put out. Through Brahmin priest, Taoist conjurer, Moham-medan dervish, and African witch-doctor, that “Light which lighteth every man as he cometh into the world,” has been turned into darkness because as abnormal religionists they have cast a shadow on

the sun. Said Christ: "All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers." That which was man's original heritage in the Eternal Word has been stolen away, rendering it more difficult for the redeeming God to do his intended work.

Satanic influence also has entered in to debase the ethnic faith. The long history of man is in line with the biblical account of an irrepressible and tragic conflict between the "seed of the woman," the Son of man, the last Adam, and the old serpent, the devil. It is therefore impossible for us to blind our eyes to the corrupting influence of diabolic agency upon the primeval order.

A day spent in Benares, Canton, or Kyoto amid the temples of idolatry and shame and witchcraft will convince any candid observer that the same Satanic influence which in Bible times animated Jannes and Jambres, Elymas, Simon Magus, and the Sons of Sceva, in modern pagan life also often makes religionists drunk with its sorceries. Let one who doubts read a work by the late Dr. John L. Nevius, a foremost Presbyterian missionary in China, on the demonology of that land. The national symbol of China is a dragon. Chinese Taoism, which once represented a sort of Logos doctrine, has so deteriorated as to be little else but the expression of demonism.

A second implication of the question propounded is that Christian missions in themselves are intrinsically the assertion of a right, as against other natural rights.

To conceive of such missionary effort as springs from the mind of Christ as the assertion of a mere right is to put such effort on too low a plane altogether. Christian missions are not concerned to defend themselves as merely legitimate; they are more than that; they are an outreach of grace in behalf of others; efforts to save men unto God and unto themselves, and not to mere western sectarianism. Said Paul as he came to the Romans, through storm and shipwreck and imprisonment: "For I long to see you that *I may impart unto you* some spiritual gift." Christianity is not competitive; it never exults over another system because it is a rival, nor seeks a victory for victory's sake. It rather yearns over the inadequate system to make good all it fails to do; it reaches beyond the devotee to the personality of the divine ideal of Christ's purchase to render it godlike in being and destiny.

Then as to the third assumption: True Christian missions do not attempt to supplant what in an ethnic faith is in itself good and true. In Confucianism, for example, it discerns between the true and the false, and seeks not to destroy it as a whole, root and branch.

So far as there are in all men elements of natural religion, true in themselves, there is no occasion to displace them. Such residue of natural religion, wherever found, is to be complemented, fulfilled, by "the true light which now shineth." Christianity in its normal exercise acts on the baser elements of other systems as quicksilver acts on pulverized, gold-bearing quartz; it gathers up the particles of gold hidden in the coarser element. In this process the rock is discarded, but there is no contempt of any real worth. As the quicksilver fulfils the quartz for bullion or coin-current, so Christianity brings to its own the truth latent in the ethnic system.

Now, with these unfortunate confusions eliminated, the question remaining to be answered is a very different one from that with which we started, so perplexing to many minds. The real issue amounts to this: *Is Christianity warranted in imparting its divine grace to all mankind, and thus realizing to them the values incipient or hinted in the ethnic systems, even though the process is sure to discard the base and harmful elements incumbering them?* There can be but one answer to such a question—an emphatic: "Yea, verily."

The Christianity of the New Testament is in no conflict with the soul in any land or time who in his light has acted penitently and believingly toward his highest ideal. That in principle is faith, whether exercised by an Abraham, a Plato, or a Spurgeon, by an Enoch, a Socrates, or a George Müller. So far, then, as among religionists of any cult, the faith-principle has existed—doubtless it often exists despite the cult—God has gracious regard for it, as ethnic religionists rarely have, for they have little or no grace to offer.

In so far, indeed, as missionary effort has been prosecuted as a crusade of one religious system as against another with a view to some selfish partisan advantage, undoubtedly such form of mission work has been open to grave objection. Wherever in any human being or society any inherent, natural right exists, Christ respects

that right. It is the thing really implanted by himself; he has therefore no occasion to antagonize it; he would rather conserve and nourish it. If sad abuses have often marred religious effort, this is because of weakness in the agent, and not because the extension of truth in itself is evil. When, for example, Francis Xavier went to the East, and, not content to share his spiritual grace with his fellow-men, proceeded to assert the claim of his imperial master at Rome to temporal power in Japan, he violated actual human rights in the interest of fictitious claims of a usurping master; it naturally resulted that the first proselytes were turned upon and slain by thousands, and Christianity interdicted in Japan for two hundred and fifty years.

In 1899, under severe pressure from France, an imperial decree was secured from the Chinese government conferring on Roman Catholic dignitaries a recognized official status in China. Accordingly, French bishops adopted the rank of Chinese governors, traveled in an official chair with bearers appropriate to that rank, with attendants and outriders, and had a cannon discharged upon their arrival and departure. When this same status was offered to Protestant missionaries, it was promptly declined. Thus they avoided blaspheming the whole principle of rights and committing missionary suicide. Says Mr. A. R. Colquhoun: "The blood of the martyrs is in China the seed of French aggrandizement."

In 1900, Germany, though Protestant, seized the district of Kiao Chao in China as an indemnity for the slaughter of two German priests, and precipitated the Boxer uprising. Is it any wonder that men ask: "What sort of missions is this?"

In estimating this question of rights, there is danger that we may attribute to them a false reality. A custom is not necessarily the expression of a natural right, nor is it a true evolution simply because it is ancient or indigenous to a people. There is a difference even in pagan lands between real and fictitious rights. Would any man in his senses claim that the horrors of Hindu widowhood, or the nameless immoralities of Hindu temples, or the abominations of the caste system, as described by Amy Wilson-Carmichael in her book, *Things as They Are*, or the system of plurality of wives in Mohammedanism, or the sodden polyandry of Tibet, represent



any human rights before God or men? Are these the product of any true evolution? That there are justifiable ways and means whereby good men may seek to remedy these abuses is beyond question.

Respecting any true element in the religion of a pagan the real missionary will say, as did Paul at Athens: "What therefore ye worship in ignorance this I set forth unto you." This element need never be antagonized or minimized; it rather is to be used and built upon. It is because of the existence of this element at the basis of every man's moral nature that Christianity can make a beginning anywhere, at any moment, with any human soul, under whatever system of religion it exists. For example, if in a heathen temple of China or India I behold some poor devotee in sorrow, groaning out a prayer to an idol, I need not check that cry; it represents just what I do when in some dire extremity I pour out my anguish to an invisible sympathy. What I need to do is to know the language of this worshiper; to gain his confidence; so to get into sympathy with him that I can show him his error; to present to him the great divine reality, which the image indeed suggests, while it yet obscures the God for whom he gropes. My mission to that man is to correct and fulfil his prayer. Of course, in so doing elements in this man's religion will be eliminated—yes, even supplanted; but in how different a sense from that contemplated by a mere contentious attack! This better kind of displacement is a wholly legitimate thing—nay, a necessary thing—if health, instead of disease is to prevail. Does displacement in this sense do violence to any thing sacred? True, on the one hand there is an elimination of error; but on the other there is a fulfilment of truth. Every introduction of pure food into the body expels from the circulation baser elements, while it nourishes the vital principle. Then why should he who is the Bread of Life be denied to the spiritually moribund, even though it is certain, in the progress of new spiritual health, that dead tissue will be thrown off? Such changes as those above indicated make possible the ascending order—the true evolution in God's universe.

But we should be dealing superficially with the real issues in this discussion if we did not point out the unique fact that Christianity is more than a school of competitive thought, in the sense that the

ethnic faiths are such—something which people are called upon to believe, merely intellectually believe. Christianity is Christ; and he is more than a school of philosophy, a set of opinions. Christ is the essential reality—the Eternal Word, or Reason—at the heart of the universe. He can be experienced and known in every personal soul, irrespective of race distinction. The world and all things therein were created through Christ—on account of Christ, according to Christ; and they are potentially redeemed to him also. Hence the secrets of life and the world can be interpreted to and understood by those only who are in him. Moreover, Christ as such a reality can be experienced only as something deeper than theoretic beliefs is grasped; only as the whole soul is surrendered to him—intellect, heart, conscience, and will. When man is thus given up to Christ in a vital way, by the divine Spirit, Christ authenticates himself to the human spirit in a wondrous way. He thus approves himself as the final need of man as man. Accordingly he can indwell man, in consonance with many racial peculiarities. Mozoomdar complained that the Christ who had been introduced to India by western missionaries was an Englishman or a Yankee, whereas he was an oriental Christ, and more apprehensible by him on that account.<sup>2</sup>

Dr. Charles Cuthbert Hall's ground-theme in his current course of lectures in the East is "the adaptation of the oriental mind (as mystical) to the experience of Christ"—a matter which probably needs to be more regarded in wise missionary endeavor.

But we do this matter of the extension of Christianity scant justice if we pause with its defense only and merely justify its rights. There is a deep imperative in it. What is this movement of foreign missions? In its simplest form, it is putting down a high type of man alongside a lower one: the planting of such a man as Moffat among the Bechuanas of South Africa, or Paton among the cannibals of the new Hebrides, or Griffith John among the Chinese. Such a personality is a reconstructive force and placed where he is needed. He translates and unfolds the Christian Scriptures to men whose light hitherto has been but as starlight to sunlight; he unveils hitherto hidden relations between the redeeming God and his creatures, who need more than all else to know him, his person, his character,

<sup>2</sup> For such an apprehension, see introduction to Mozoomdar's *The Oriental Christ*.

his grace; he puts the languages of rude tribes into writing—one hundred such languages within a century—and creates new literatures; he brings back the shattered polyglot tribes of men to a better Shinar than that which once witnessed the confusion of Babel. The missionary puts into the hands of men schools, hospitals, and industries. He affords sane treatment to disease, relief to the opium vice, and works a gradual cure of the “open sore of the world.” He abates the evils of Hindu widowhood, gathers thousands of children into orphanages, and unbinds the crippled feet of numberless innocents. All this is more than proselytism, mere sect-making.

Should any think that the work of missions is an arbitrary forcing of issues upon the peoples of heathendom, let him hear Mr. Chester Holcombe, for twenty years connected with the diplomatic staff of the United States in China. In a recent article on the missionary enterprise he thus writes:

To talk to persons who choose to listen; to throw open wide the doors of chapels where natives who desire may hear the Christian faith explained and urged upon their attention; to sell at half-cost or to give the Bible and Christian literature freely to those who may care to read; to heal the sick without cost; to instruct children whose parents are desirous that they should receive education—surely none of these constitute methods or practices to which the word “force” may be applied, under any allowable use of the English language. . . . There is no difference between the work of pioneer preachers in the Far West, that of “settlement workers” in the slums of great cities, or of eloquent pastors of wealthy and fashionable churches in the Back Bay district of Boston, or Fifth Avenue in New York, and that done by missionaries in China. . . . The work is absolutely identical in character and method, differentiated from the others only by simple forms of presentation in order to reach the more effectively minds wholly unfamiliar with the truths presented.

Even as I write, this paragraph of a letter sent from twenty native Christians in the interior of Africa is before me:

We are those who went astray, but the Lord did not leave us. He sought us with perseverance, and we heard his call and answered. Now we are his slaves. We had three teachers. One is in Europe; another has gone to Ikau; and this one who stays with us shortly goes to rest in Europe. With whom shall we be left? It is good that you should send us teachers who cause us to be full of the words of the Father. We have a desire to hear your teachings of Jehovah God; and we have a desire to see you in the eyes, but we have not the opportunity; we shall have it in heaven.

Does this sound as if missionary effort had wrought any wrong to this people so recently out of fetishism and cannibalism?

If we today have no right to plant in India, China, and Africa the seeds of intellectual and moral renewal, then our ancestors, who were pagans in the forests of North Germany, about the lagoons of Holland, and on the moors of Britain, were in egregious error when they set in operation the forces which translated and printed the Bible, founded the universities, promulgated the Magna Charta, brought on the Reformation, and induced the successive migrations from Europe whereby the New World was discovered, peopled, and refashioned into the great, free republic that it is.

The truth is, the Christ of the universe cannot be himself and fail to do what is involved in his gracious incarnation; nor can his people be themselves as indwelt by him and not extend this incarnation and re-enact his gracious deeds. To deny the legitimacy of Christian missions is to deny the right of holy and gracious sovereignty in God, and to invalidate the legitimacy of all best things in life and history; and that is to legitimize their opposites—to assert the rights of sin and deify its prince.

The final question, then, is not whether the Christian church may force arbitrary changes upon a people, but whether, through moral suasion, it may introduce ideas, principles, and potencies that will inevitably bring about wholesome changes for which a people itself in the end will be grateful. Can anyone question the benignity of present endeavors in China to overcome the worst by the better? And is not China increasingly friendly to such results? If not, why has the queen dowager abolished the examinations of the old style, and introduced instead the new western education? Why has she discouraged foot-binding, promulgated a sabbath rest-day, and taken steps toward the abolition of the opium curse? Is Chang Chi Tung, author of *China's Only Hope*, less a patriot because, discerning that the vitalities of western nations are largely due to the Christian Bible, he has issued a decree encouraging the 58,000,000 in Hupeh and Hunan, over whom he rules, now to study the New Testament? He at least has discovered that the Christian book is more than an ethnic book; that it is *pan-ethnic*; that it is uniquely human, and so, of course, that it is a Mongolian book. If so, then

any displacement it may work will result in the betterment of China. Of course, all this involves overthrow, but legitimate overthrow of the infantine by the mature, of the false by the true, of the heathen by the Christian. For this purpose the world and all its dispensations were made, that through turnings and overturnings the true destinies of mankind may be realized.

The ideal of all we plead for is concretely presented in the New Testament picture of our Lord's transfiguration. This transfiguration is really the archetypal form of that characteristic work of redemption wherein mankind and all that belongs to him are to be transformed into the same glory which Christ himself exhibited in the holy mount. The scene is best understood when viewed in contrast with another scene; viz., that in the plain, just following it.

Two types of sonship are presented: That of Jesus in the glory ensuing upon his full acceptance of his impending cross, concerning which the Father, speaking right out of the blue, exclaimed: "This is my Son, my chosen"—"the ideal potentiality I cherish for all men, what I mean by sonship." The other type is seen in the child of a broken-hearted earthly father whom the disciples through default in prayer had failed to heal. This was a son of the natural man—the limited human father—plus all the damage sin and the demon had wrought in him. He was "lunatic," torn by the spirit, fallen at the Savior's feet "as one dead;" he "wallowed, foaming." There he lay, a devil's masterpiece—sin in the death-process. The acme of distress uttered itself in the father's cry: "I beseech thee, look upon my son; for he is mine only child"—literally, mine "only begotten;" the same word that describes the relation of Jesus to his father. How different the fatherhoods and how unlike the sonships in these contrasting pictures! Now, all this may be regarded as a dramatization of the task of Christ's successors in this sinful world. This task is naught less than to take human souls stricken and damaged by sin, and to begin to transfigure them—to *change* them from prostrate, sin-cursed, earthly sonship to radiant, glorified, heavenly sonship like Christ's own, idealized in that mount.

This transfiguration was not for Christ alone. He is but "the first-born of many brethren." The transfiguration was for all men and for all theirs. It is for the poor Indian fakir, the crazed, super-

stitious Chinese Boxer, the gross South Sea cannibal, the barbarous African savage, and the just as needy, though polished, Anglo-Saxon agnostic. This transfigurement amounts to *salvation*—Christian salvation, the only salvation worthy of God and of ourselves. Moreover, this salvation can never be adequately known or consciously realized apart from that wisdom and power which are lodged in the cross of Christ and its gospel. To bring such a salvation to men the Christian church not only has the right, but is bound, in the appropriate “times and seasons,” to go everywhere upon this planet where the Redeemer himself would come. This warrant and duty are the charter of the Christian church; the right to love where others hate, to cherish where others neglect, to bless where others curse, to offer felicity in this world and the world to come where others consign to darkness and despair. This is the right divine, *the redemptive right to communicate the grace of Christian missions.*

BOSTON, MASS.

HENRY C. MABIE

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#### MISSIONS FROM THE STANDPOINT OF COMPARATIVE RELIGION

Before I begin to speak of missions, I shall make a few general comments on the standpoint from which I purpose to treat the subject. I shall not assume the attitude of a defender of any special religious system, sectarian or non-sectarian, Christian or non-Christian; nor shall I act as a judge who pronounces a verdict on the claims of the different faiths. I shall speak as a scientist in the same way as a botanist would contemplate the struggle for existence in the flora of a country, or a zoölogist would ventilate the problem of the competition among and the distribution of the several animal species on the face of the earth. And, taking this standpoint of an impartial observer, I have come to the conclusion that missions are an essential part of church life, for the religion which makes no propaganda for its faith is dead.

Competition is a highly important factor in the world of animated nature. The strong survive, and the weak go to the wall. The strong are not always the best, nor are they necessarily physically strong. They are the best adapted under definite circumstances; yet a close observation of nature and the history of the development

of life teaches us that, in the long run and over the widest area as our field of observation, we may expect that the best will maintain themselves in spite of all the advantages and temporary victories of the vicious and immoral. Therefore, in consideration of the important part for good or evil played by religion, we should respect the religious spirit and look upon it as highly commendable. Competition is good for life, although it frequently entails hardships and eliminates the weak. Competition acts as a sieve in which the best are selected for survival. It is a test in which the qualities of living creatures are tried and those which are found to be wanting are discarded. Competition is hard for those who run the race, but it is indispensable for procuring the final victory of the best; and this is true not only in the domain of physical life, but also and especially in the intellectual and moral field.

It may appear odd to a religious believer that religion, too, needs competition, and that competition alone can bring out the good qualities of a superior faith; but this is also the maxim of Christ, who purposes to let the wheat and the tares grow until the harvest, when the tree would be recognized by its fruit.

A consideration of the course of events teaches us that finally the thinking part of mankind will come to an agreement as to the nature of religious truth, and in this sense there will be but one religion over the entire world. To be sure, there are certain peculiar idiosyncrasies which produce a difference of needs in the satisfaction of religious wants. There are sentimental people who need a sentimental religion; there are others who want artistic forms and elaborate rituals; still others prefer Puritan simplicity and an absence of all ceremony, which savors to them of idolatry and primitive paganism. These are mere externalities, and the choice of one or the other will always be a matter of temperament and personal preference. Not so the kernel of religion, which is the truth contained in these different forms. Differences of form will be respected, but they will not be treated as essentials.

Such, in my opinion, is the aim of the religious life of mankind, and it is intrinsically foreordained in the nature of things; yet, in order to actualize this consummation devoutly to be wished, it is desirable that those faiths which cherish the confidence that they

possess the truth should show their zeal for working out and spreading their conception of truth—and this is done by missions.

The religious development of mankind passes through definite phases, which repeat themselves in different countries among nations that are otherwise radically different. This is not the place to enter into an explanation of the laws of religious phenomena; for, in the first place, they are in their general outlines well established, and, besides, the dissensions which may prevail on the subject in details are unimportant for our present investigation. The oldest phase has been called animism, a belief in the spiritual nature of man's surroundings. Animism changed to polytheism, a belief in spiritual beings who were both good and evil. Polytheism again is unified into monotheism; and monotheism passes in its turn through the phases of dualism and monism, and is at present tending to establish a new phase which we may call a scientific world-conception. This new view which is now knocking at the door is often supposed to leave no room for religion, and this is especially the view of free-thinkers who identify religion with religious superstitions, proposing that it would be best for mankind to get rid of religion. This view prevails mainly among the Romance nations where the Roman church holds unbounded sway; and Guyot has become the spokesman of this class by announcing "the irreligion of the future." However, in countries which have been favored by competition between the different churches there is dawning on mankind a new interpretation of the religious question which modifies religious traditions to such an extent that religion may find room in a scientific world-conception. Whenever this is done, even the most radical thinkers grant to religion a central and most prominent place in the scientific conception of the world.

It is a common practice among liberals to denounce missions as an impudence, and missionaries are accused of intruding their own private views concerning religion upon strangers; but, though the author professes to be as liberal as anyone of them, he cannot, from his point of view, join in the general hue and cry, but claims that these objections are based partly on a wrong conception of the significance of missions, and partly (in so far as they are justified) only point out some wrong methods pursued by Christian mission-



aries in non-Christian countries. In the latter case their accusations form no argument against the principle of missions.

Between the sixth and eighth centuries Christianity spread rapidly over all those nations of Europe which are now the torch-bearers of civilization. The first decisive step was taken by Pope Gregory the Great, a missionary genius, whose methods were based on a profound, or perhaps an instinctive, appreciation of psychological conditions. Pope Gregory advised his missionaries to replace the old religion by preserving its external form and giving it a new interpretation. He practically left the old institutions unchanged except in their names. He did not touch the inveterate habits to which people had become accustomed, but he christianized and assimilated them. Pope Gregory says in a letter preserved by the venerable Bede:

Because they [the Anglo-Saxons] are wont to slaughter at the feast of the devils [i. e., of the pagan gods] many oxen and horses, it is decidedly necessary to let these feasts be continued and have another *raison d'être* given them. On kirmess and on the commemoration days of the holy martyrs, whose relics are preserved in those churches which are built on the spots of pagan fanes, a similar feast shall be celebrated; the festive place shall be decorated with green boughs and a church sociable shall be held. Only the slaughter of animals shall no longer be held in honor of Satan, but in praise of God, and the animals shall be slaughtered for the sake of eating them, and thanks shall be given for the gift to the Giver of all goods.<sup>3</sup>

Here we have the reason why so many of the old pagan religions have been preserved and transferred, as it were, into Christian institutions; but the result is that Europe was rapidly christianized.

From the standpoint of comparative religion I venture to say that the pagan religion of the Saxons as well as of all other Teutonic nations would in any case have changed by natural processes into a religion similar to Christianity. Their polytheistic creed was in a state of decay, caused by a rationalist movement which had prepared them for a monotheistic universal religion. We have poems preserved in the *Edda* and other mythological books of the North in which the gods are ridiculed with no less satire than we find in the free-thinking authors of the later days of classical antiquity, where we can trace the progress of monotheism with greater clearness.

<sup>3</sup> *Historia ecclesiastica Britannorum*, Vol. I, chap. 30.

The introduction of Christianity only hastened this process for the benefit of the Teutons, who were thus enabled to make rapid progress. They had reached the stage in which their ancient faith had become antiquated, and a faith like the Christianity of the ninth century, a universal monotheistic religion, representing God as an emperor and Jesus as a king and God's vicegerent on earth, would naturally take its place.

Incidentally I will add here that China is in a similar condition at present, and China might have become Christian not less rapidly than the North of Europe during the eighth and ninth centuries. The spread of education and a certain freedom of thought have prepared the Chinese mind for the acceptance of a monotheism which would find embodiment in such a religion as Christianity. They have assimilated Buddhist ethics, which are quite similar to the moral maxims of Christianity; but they have not yet, at least not the large masses of people, overcome the superstitious element in the belief of their divinities, and many irrational practices of the popular Taoist faith. China, in passing into a phase represented by dogmatic Christianity, may, however, work out a kindred religion on the basis of Buddhist traditions, because Christianity has become offensive to them, solely on account of the unwise and sometimes positively immoral behavior of the Christians, the policy of Christian nations as well as the demeanor of individuals. Christianity would have the advantage of being ready-made and possessed of sufficient concreteness to suit the needs of a religious heart, while a new analogous religion would presumably remain hazy.

Why has not China embraced Christianity? My answer is simply this, that our missionaries have been blundering in a most inexcusable way, instead of following the old traditions laid down by Pope Gregory.

Since Christianity became victorious in Europe and has existed there practically alone, it has become ossified and has ceased to be as broad as it was in the days before it had triumphed over its rivals, simply because it has ceased to have the benefit of competition with them. There are missionaries who go out in the right spirit, but they appear to be in the minority. The majority have, as a rule, a contempt for the paganism of the country which they intend to

convert, and the result is that they offend unnecessarily and only stir animosity against the foreign faith. Pope Gregory adapted Christianity to conditions, utilizing the institutions of pagans and giving them a new and a Christian interpretation; while we find, on the contrary, that Christian missionaries of today in China are bent on making the Chinese into Europeans or Americans. They are frequently hostile to any adaptation of the Christian faith to Chinese view-points, and insist that converts should give up their Chinese traditions. At least that has been the practice among missionaries, and Rev. Hampden Du Bose mentions it as one of the main difficulties of missionary work.

The Chinese are distinguished among the nations for their reverence of their ancestors. They have annual family festivals, at which the head of the family acts as a kind of priest. It is not uncommon that the family trees of simple folks are older than the oldest aristocracies of Europe, and there is no reasonable doubt that "these registers are kept with great care and may be considered reliable." There is not the slightest reason why this institution of what has been termed ancestor-worship should not be imbued with a Christian spirit, and some means be found by which a Christian convert could attend the family festivals without doing violence to his conscience; but this is not so. We quote literally from Du Bose:

Should a man become a Christian and repudiate ancestral worship, all his ancestors would by that act be consigned to a state of perpetual beggary. Imagine, too, the moral courage required for an only or the eldest son to become a Christian, and call down upon himself the anathemas, not only of his own family and friends, but of the spirits of all his ancestors. When we preach against this form of paganism, it seems as heathenish to the Chinese as if at home we taught a child to disobey his father and despise his mother. It forms one of the subtlest phases of idolatry—essentially evil with the guise of goodness—ever established among men.

Our civilization is undoubtedly superior to others, especially in methods of warfare (and that counts more than culture and morality in international politics), and Christian missionaries not only feel this superiority of the race to which they belong, but also emphasize it and make a show of it which is naturally offensive. Our favorite missionary hymn, so poetical and impressive, describes the beautiful Buddhist island of the Indian Ocean in these words:

What though the spicy breezes  
Blow soft o'er Ceylon's isle,  
Though every prospect pleases,  
And only man is vile;  
In vain with lavish kindness  
The gifts of God are strown,  
The heathen in his blindness  
Bows down to wood and stone.

The declaration that "only man is vile" has created more bitterness among the natives and hostility to Christianity than the author anticipated.

Professor Edward G. Browne, the well-known specialist of Persian literature, and our most reliable interpreter of Babism and Behaism says:

How is it that the Christian doctrine, the highest and noblest which the world has ever known, though supported by all the resources of western civilization, can only count its converts in Mohammedan lands by two's and three's, while Babism can reckon them by thousands? The answer, to my mind, is plain as the sun at midday: Western Christianity, save in the rarest cases, is more western than Christian, more racial than religious.

Another hindrance to the success of missionaries is their method of tearing down and disparaging the religion which they come to replace. By being unfair they simply antagonize, and make themselves liable to be regarded as enemies of the country. Du Bose, for instance, speaks of Buddha as "the night of Asia," and is so one-sided in his characterization of Lao Tze that he translates this cognomen of one of the most venerable sages of mankind by "Old Boy," and adds: "The wild-western appellation 'old coon' is not inappropriate." What can we expect of a missionary who is not only unfair in judging some of the noblest and most intellectual leaders of mankind, but becomes positively vulgar in speaking of them? Ingersoll's attacks on Christianity are certainly not more offensive to Christians than the language of Du Bose must be to an educated Chinaman, and Du Bose, I am sorry to say, still belongs to the better class of missionaries. He is a faithful Christian, and also quite scholarly; for his writings prove that he is very well informed on the subjects which he discusses. But we can expect no good results of the work of a man who lacks in fairness and gentlemanly behavior.

The opinion is quite common that Christianity has from the beginning been discriminated against as a foreign faith by the Chinese authorities and has always been hated by the people. This is not the case. Buddhism is also a foreign faith; so is Mohammedanism; and yet they are both unmolested.

In the sixth century the Nestorians reached China and found no difficulty in having Christianity recognized as one of the legitimate religions of the country. Emperor Tai Tsung received Nestorian preachers at his court, had the Christian doctrines explained to him, and ordered their chief books to be translated. The Nestorian monument erected in 781 A. D. is still extant, and Marco Polo tells us of Presbyter John's empire among the Kara Kitai Tartars. His dominion came to an end in 1203, when he succumbed to the great conqueror, Jenghis Khan. Marco Polo further mentions the great interest which Kublai Khan took in Christianity, and the desire he showed to have his subjects converted to this dominant faith of the West.

Christianity is the strongest religion on earth, if measured by the power, wealth, and influence of its adherents; but it has one weak spot, which is its antagonism to science and a scientific world-conception. The same or similar drawbacks are more or less noticeable in all religions, but they are specially obvious in Christianity for the very reason of its strength during the period of its dogmatic development. Buddhism suffers less from the same drawback, and will therefore be the most formidable rival of Christianity. In the struggle between different religions I predict a final success for that faith which will be most ready to learn from the other, to assimilate the good of it, to adapt itself to new conditions, and to adopt the maturest truth that science has to offer. The final result is fore-ordained: he wins in the race who reaches the goal, and the goal of our religious growth is truth—truth grasped by the head, felt in the heart, and actualized with the hand.

The most advanced representatives of Christianity, under the influence of higher criticism and generally the culture of the age, resulting from a better familiarity with the natural sciences, are just on the verge of abandoning the old dogmatisms and surrendering all opposition to science. This will considerably modify the tenets

of Christianity; yet, for all that, it may and it will preserve the traditional spirit of devotion, of religious earnestness, and of moral endeavor. It will prove to be a change from childhood to maturity, and, if seen in this light, result in a new, a deeper, and a truer interpretation of the same facts that have confronted mankind since the beginning.

Without entering into particular details, I propose here briefly to touch upon the most significant incident in the recent history of missions in China. During the middle of the nineteenth century there appeared a man by the name of Hung Seu Tseuen at the door of an English Episcopal mission and demanded admittance as catechumen. It is incredible that he was refused on the plea that they were overcrowded with applicants. The man was a simple school-master, and the missionaries who refused to give him instruction saw nothing extraordinary in his personality; and yet he was destined to become the leader of a Chinese Christianity which played such an important part in the Tai Ping rebellion. Hung Seu Tseuen had been converted to Christianity by reading the Gospel of Matthew, and he was mainly struck by the impressive Sermon on the Mount. Being refused at the European mission, he baptized himself and began to preach Christianity on his own responsibility. He was discharged and persecuted, but he continued to preach and made a deep impression on the people. By seeking new residences he only spread his views, and he was soon surrounded by converts ready to defend his person and resist the authorities that would persecute him. In one village they defied the police and routed a detachment of soldiers sent against him, so that he and his followers were forced into a war with the established authorities. The rebellion spread, and he gained more and more adherents every day. His men fought, like the soldiers of Cromwell, with gun in one hand and prayer-book in the other. They were fanatics, and remained victorious even against superior forces. When the rumor that the Tai Ping rebels were Christians reached the European settlements, it was refused credence, and Thomas Taylor Meadows, Chinese interpreter in Her Majesty's civil service wrote:

My knowledge of the Chinese mind, joined to the dejected admissions that Protestant missionaries of many years' standing occasionally made of the fruit-

lessness of their labors, had convinced me that Christianity, as hardened into our sectarian creeds, could not possibly find converts among the Chinese, except here and there perhaps an isolated individual. Consequently, when it was once or twice rumored that the large body of men who were setting imperial armies at defiance "were Christians," I refused to give the rumor credence. It did not occur to me that the Chinese convert, through some tracts of a Chinese convert, might either fail to see, or (if he saw them) might spontaneously eliminate, the dogmas and congealed forms of merely sectarian Christianity, and then, by preaching simply the great religious truth of One God, and the pure morality of Christ's Sermon on the Mount, obtain numbers of followers among people disgusted with the idolatry and the immorality that they and those around them were engulfed in. As we have seen above, this was actually the case with Hung Seu Tseuen.

The Tai Ping rebels took one city after another, and were finally in possession of whole provinces. Hung Seu Tseuen ruled in Nankin under the name Tien Wang, or "Heavenly King," and the imperial throne of China was tottering. There was, indeed, a strong probability that a Chinese Christian emperor would replace the Mongol pagan dynasty. But history is sometimes stranger than fiction, for at this juncture England came to the rescue and proposed to show her friendliness for the established authorities. General Gordon was sent to China, and with his arrival the cause of the Tai Ping rebels declined, until they were finally defeated. In spite of a promise made them that their lives should be spared at the moment of surrender, the leaders were executed by the Chinese mandarins, before Gordon's protests could save them. The latter, however, on account of this breach of promise at once tendered his resignation, and the queen of England expressed her gratitude to the gallant general, in a personal letter, for his efficient service which led to the suppression of this great Chinese-Christian movement.

In justification of the British policy it has been claimed that the Tai Ping rebels were not true Christians, but their books proved that they believed in God the Father, Creator and Ruler of the universe, and in Jesus Christ, his Son, our elder brother; and they looked upon the Sermon on the Mount as the foundation of their code of morality.<sup>4</sup>

Missionaries, in order to be successful, should not go with the

<sup>4</sup> For a translation of the Tai Ping canon see the *Open Court* for January, 1902, pp. 59-63.

ostensible purpose of converting people, nor should their labors be measured by the number of converts; they should go to take pagans information concerning Christianity, and acting, as it were, as ambassadors of a foreign faith. Yet even in doing this they should not exhibit an intention to teach, but, on the contrary, should show a desire to learn. Instead of avoiding pagan priests, the representatives of Buddhism, Taoism, Mohammedanism, or of any other faith, they should approach them in the spirit of inquiry and ask them for information of their own religion, which will gladly be given, and only when a mutual interest has been established, they should, when requested, in return give them information as to their own Christian doctrines and ideals.

First the missionary must take an interest in the pagans and their beliefs. He must respect an honest faith of a different kind. Thereby alone can he lay the foundation for a mutual sympathy that naturally will be productive of a friendly exchange of thought. When they have thus been prepared, and not before, the missionary should reveal to them the message which he has come to proclaim. This policy would no doubt meet with better success, and would find a friendly and grateful response. It would change the character of missionaries from aggressive revolutionists to that of friendly visitors. They would cease to be destroyers of the old faith and the old morality, and would become helpful friends who have come to compare the best which two different nations can offer in thought and moral aspirations. There is no need of maligning Buddha, Lao Tze, or Confucius, but simply to add to the ideals of other religious systems the good that Christianity has to offer.

The rules which ought to be observed by all of us are well set forth by Rev. George T. Candlin, of Tien-tsin, a Christian missionary to China who personally and in friendliness met the Buddhist and Confucian delegates from eastern Asia on the platform of the Parliament of Religions. He writes:

We must begin by giving one another credit for good intentions. I do not see why we may not commence at once by the leading representatives of the various faiths who were present at Chicago, including all the distinguished representatives of Christianity, with Mr. Mozoomdar, Mr. Dharmapāla, Mr. Vivekananda, Mr. Ghandi, the Buddhists of Japan, the high-priest of Shintoism, and our friend Mr. Pung, entering into direct covenant with each other:



1. Personally never to speak slightly of the religious faith of one another. This, I understand, does not debar the kindly and reverential discussion of differences which exist, or the frank utterance of individual belief.

2. Officially to promote among their partisans, by all means in their power, by oral teaching, through the press, and by whatever opportunity God may give them, a like spirit of brotherly regard and honest respect for the belief of others.

3. To discourage among the various peoples they serve as religious guides all such practices and ceremonies as, not constituting an essential part of their faith, are inimical to its purity, and are the strongest barriers to union.

4. To promote all such measures as will advance reform, progress and enlightenment, political liberty, and social improvement among the people of their own faith and nationality.

5. To regard it as part of their holiest work on earth to enlist all men of ability and influence with whom they are brought into contact in the same noble cause.

To these articles I can heartily subscribe myself, I do not see why others may not.

In applying the principle enunciated in the beginning of this article, that competition in religion is good, I would go one step farther and advocate not only to send missionaries to non-Christian countries, but, vice versa, also to encourage non-Christian missionaries to be sent to Christian countries. Let the pagans, especially those who represent the highest faiths which non-Christian religions have produced—such as Buddhism, Parseism, and Mohammedanism—send representatives to us, who, not unlike the delegates to the Parliament of Religions, would give us direct, reliable information concerning their doctrines and their moral principles; and, when they have lived some time among us, let them go back to their own people and tell them what they have seen and heard, and how they have been received among Christians. If devotees of other religions are too poor to carry on such missionary propaganda, it would even be advisable for Christians to pay the traveling expenses and support such non-Christian delegates in Christian countries. If they have something good to tell us, if they have a message which we should heed and which would help to broaden us, the better for us; and if not, they would certainly carry back to their homes seeds of truth that will take root and bring forth a rich harvest of spiritual blessings.

WHAT HAS CHRISTIANITY TO OFFER TO ORIENTAL  
NATIONS?

The future will be an era of foreign missions, but the form of the motive and the methods employed will change. The motive in the past has worn the form of a pity aiming to rescue individual souls from an eternal suffering. The method of conversion required the pagan to repudiate the organized conceptions and traditions which served as the background of his personal existence, and to adopt, abruptly and completely, the system of conceptions in which, by virtue of a tradition descended from Israel and from the Graeco-Roman age of the church, the missionary's own religious experience was environed. There will be, in the first place, a modification of the motive. The very ardor and assurance of our faith in divine fatherhood forbid us to hold the view that those who fail to know the manifestation of his love in Christ are the objects of his wrath. Nevertheless, powerful motives and irresistible impulsions necessitate the work of foreign missions.

Every modern man of normal seriousness adheres to his religion because it is universal religion, universally true, universally valid. If we remain obstinately divided in denominations, it is not because we love to differ and cherish division, but because the truth for all souls seems to involve necessarily our denominational form. Whenever men begin to distrust that identification of form and substance, a movement of interdenominational sympathy or consolidation begins. In these perplexed days there are many who admit that not every element of Christian doctrine and practice has universal validity, but they adhere to Christianity nevertheless, because in, with, and under that which is historically relative there are elements that have finality, elements that grip and compel the human soul with the sovereignty of ideal obligation, universally imperative for man as man. It is, indeed, today's special task for the Christian theologian that he shall assist society to a sure analysis of Christian history and Christian experience, in order that these universally sovereign elements may be clearly recognized amid the transient and accidental accretions. We ask for truth to reign over us, not as pleasantly suited to the taste and custom of our local neighborhood, but because it is truth for man as man, that which ought to be

always and everywhere and by all men believed, the form of truth which the universal Will imposes upon all the finite wills of his human manifestation. We may be content to allow or eager to advocate a revision of the historic expression of Christianity, but it cannot cease to be the universal religion for all who yield to its spell. By virtue of this very universality of validity and compelling power, the Christian truth will hereafter, as it now does, impel its disciples to convert all nations.

There is the less need to argue this assertion since we are concerned with a truth that demands more than the mere assent of the reflective reason. The Christian verity that God is a loving Father is not a proposition abstractly held before our reflection. It is a thrilling experience of the character of the Will that is sovereign over us, that will not let us go, that claims us ever for his purposes. It confers a mission on us. It gives into our hands a pilgrim staff and bids us seek the Fatherland. The Christian truth is messianic truth. Historically, Christianity was born from the messianic idea which gave Israel its significance. The Scriptures from which it has nourished itself form one Bible by virtue of the messianic interest binding together the old and new dispensations. Christianity allied itself to the universal state in order to transform the social system into a City of God. The papacy became a theocracy in order that it might accomplish the church's duty to conform the social life to the religious ideal. We who have a free church in a free state simply attempt the same purpose by methods of persuasion in place of methods of coercive authority. Divine fatherhood and Christian brotherhood are not mere truths for spiritual delectation or inactive truths of contemplative moments. They are dynamic ideas that tell us what kind of men we should be and what kind of society we should have. Nor do they simply tell us; they propel us. Now, the messianic ideal which is inseparable from the central truths of Christianity dictates a society whose principles and spirit are not of private and local application, but are universal in their demands on men. The Christian life is the life which means to realize the life of the kingdom of God, and this sovereign principle of all Christian history will release no Christian from missionary duties at home or abroad. At home our present distresses combine with our com-

pulling ideals to urge us into missionary work. The strife of industrial classes and the inequalities of condition which breed inequality of spiritual attainment rouse the Christian conscience to more intense effort for a social system that shall be conformed to the image of the kingdom of God. It is a similar case in our relations to foreign peoples. Just when Christian feeling is reacting with a more fervid horror against war, a new problem for humanity looms up in the Orient. The Asiatic peoples are roused to a new self-consciousness and a militant ambition. We confront the problems of a humanity divided in hostile social systems with menace of hatred and war, and these social systems differ as Christian and non-Christian. To hostilities of race and commercial interest there is added the deep-rooted alienation of religion. Human civilization is perhaps to depend in large degree on the establishment of a spiritual unity for these divided segments of humanity. The method of conquest would be the surrender of all religion. There is, therefore, a new demand for missions from the new situation. The dynamic compelling sovereignty of that idea which mixes itself with life in Christian lands, the messianic vision of the kingdom of God, constrains us to win the Orient to occidental life—not as our life is in its low given status, but as it is in its own ideal conception of itself as a christianized humanity. The catholicity which came to Christian consciousness in the earliest missionary period is an inexpugnable element of Christianity. We hold truth for the soul only on terms of catholicity of value. We surrender to a conception of life only on terms of making it the universal life. Strong and irresistible motives for foreign missions remain.

But the methods will change, and the necessity of a change can be illustrated by the contrast of ancient and mediaeval missions. Christianity won the Graeco-Roman world by stating itself in terms of general history. It viewed Jesus not simply as the elect agent of the messianic kingdom, but as the vehicle of the Logos who was the principle of all history. Christianity claimed the souls of men by becoming for them the very meaning of that wisdom which had poured upon the spirit both of Hebrew prophets and of gentile sage. It was the essence and ideal significance of all the tradition that made the formative conditions of their personal lives. It is inconceivable

that a civilization of matured culture could have been won by any other method.

To the Germanic peoples, on the other hand, Christianity came as a total civilization that overwhelmed comparison and made the traditions of their own raw, unformed lives insignificant and feeble. Our Saxon forefathers were converted in masses, and with a marvelous alacrity they substituted for their own dim historic background the story of man that was found in the Bible. For their own wild morals they substituted a discipline in a code of Christian virtue. They were children, and they were converted by a process only possible for children. The Greek pagan was persuaded, brought to insight and conviction; the German pagan was converted.

The peoples of India and of Asia are not children. They have an established civilization which will not be lightly discarded at foreign suggestion. Their culture, their social or technical organization spring from a life of ancient and remembered grandeur, from a rich past which yields them idealizing influence and confers a dignity upon them. This whole system is permeated and shaped by religious conceptions which have not lost validity for them. Religious belief appeals to Scriptures that have ethical worth and metaphysical profundity—Scriptures from which we ourselves obtain gleams, brilliant though broken, of that which is the master-life of all our seeing. There, too, God has not left himself without witness, though the eastern appreciation of the truth may be confused and darkened by elements historically contingent to Asian localities and Asian transient conditions. It is plainly impossible to expect that India and China can discard this rich background and suddenly think their religious experience in terms of European history and European thought. There can be no abrupt conquest of an oriental mind like the conquests made by Augustine in Kent or by Boniface at Geismar. We must use the sane and rational process of the early Alexandrian school. Believing that the Light has fallen on all nations, it is our duty to rescue our oriental brother from the bewildering confusion of his religious ideas by a sympathetic effort with him to analyze and simplify and conceive in more universal terms of thought, in order that what the analysis may reveal as essential substance may be appreciated as having kinship to that

which our own faith presents in purer and higher form, or else that it may be by the contrast exhibited as error. This is a propaganda which first of all seeks to comprehend the oriental, and wins his adhesion to our form of faith through the necessitation of his own insight.

This is but the extension abroad of the method which we use for the conversion of one another at home. We compare our varying versions of history and doctrine, and we labor first of all to understand our neighbor's position, entering into its intent and spirit with our utmost sympathy, and then we argue that what our neighbor means and intends obtains its best expression and fullest power in our form of apprehension. It is an excellent feature of this process that we inevitably drop from our own view that which is merely personal and contingent, and succeed thereby both in apprehending and in presenting our own faith in greater objectivity and in the simplicity of its essentials. So a sympathetic foreign mission would result doubtless in the speedier release of the vital essence of our own faith from accidental incumbrances that are only obstacles to its claim of catholicity. More important still, we shall be performing a critical work on the oriental faiths which the oriental man has not yet learned to do, and we shall be aiding him to a right comprehension and right valuation that will, first of all, act as a solvent and unifying force for eastern sects and thus facilitate the ultimate reconception of their common traditions in the light of Christianity. We of the West have learned or are learning a method of dealing with the phenomena of religion. It is a critical, scientific method. The method dominates our schools of theology, and its results are already apparent in the generation of sympathy and unity between men who were once confessionally sundered. More and more, also, this method permeates popular intelligence. Men neglect the traditional forms of expression and the divisive accidents. They drive for the substance that is permanent and unifying. A Hindu scholar assures me that our best service to India would be to send thither teachers who will domesticate with them this art and method of ours, in order to rescue them from their otherwise capricious and random use of their own inheritance of thought. The remark surely indicates that there can be no suc-

cessful work to win the intelligence of such lands except by sharing with them our new and priceless achievement of the scientific history of religion and the philosophic results to which it leads. The practical intention of this argument is that, in addition to the medical missions and the general educational work which our human altruism will never allow us to abandon, we shall carry a propaganda of scientific religious study to the homes of the religions that are asked to discover their fulfilment in Christianity. In particular it means a generous and sympathetic co-operation of study and discussion with every oriental movement that enters upon the path of conscious kinship with our Christian world. What more effective and more rational way could be devised for the universalizing and christianizing of Indian life than an adequate co-operation with the Brahmo Somaj in the establishment of a school of religion where—without the interference of the motive of denominational extension—the man of India and the man of Europe should together study universal religious history, and win the common ground which must result from the application of a common method to the facts? This is, indeed, the project which the leaders of the Brahmo Somaj desire to accomplish, and for which they should receive a generous American assistance. I have met many Japanese in America who were accounted Christian. I have noted that the conversion had not been such a complete case of substitution as missionaries have expected. They had not really surrendered that sum of memories that makes the soul of Japan. They were in reality simply trying in individual fashion to make some synthesis of Christian theism with their Japanese inheritance. This is the natural way, and the missionary way should be natural. *Gratia naturam non tollit, sed perficit.*

FRANCIS A. CHRISTIE

MEADVILLE THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL  
Meadville, Pa.